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After 'conditional truce', all eyes on Kabul's next steps

• Islamabad says ceasefire with western neighbour not 'open-ended'; any breach will trigger 'all options'
• Foreign Office insists Istanbul statement a 'preface', not full text of accord • Says Taliban privately acknowledge TTP, BLA presence in Afghanistan • Khawaja Asif hints at multi-nation monitors, says 'terrorism must stop'

By Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad on Friday viewed the Istanbul agreement with Kabul as a conditional truce and a step forward, but not an end-state as it awaited the next high-level engagement with the Afghan Taliban regime scheduled for Nov 6 in Turkiye.

"Afghanistan should understand that this arrangement is a conditional truce, one which hinges on demonstrable responsibility by the Afghan side," a senior security source said on condition of anonymity, underscoring Pakistan's cautious optimism after five days of intense talks in Istanbul mediated by Turkiye and Qatar.

Talks revived: Editorial on Page 6

The round of negotiations, which concluded earlier this week, produced a three-point understanding — the continuation of the ceasefire, the establishment of a monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure peace, and penalties for violations.

The operational details of that mechanism are expected to be finalised when the "principals", senior representatives from both sides, meet again in Istanbul on Thursday.

The Istanbul talks followed a sharp escalation in tensions last month that saw Pakistan launch Oct 9 airstrikes on TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan, triggering Oct 11 border clashes that continued for days before a ceasefire was formalised in Doha on Oct 18-19.

The Istanbul agreement came after days of deadlock that nearly brought the process to a halt, with mediators pulling both delegations back to the table even as Pakistan's team had already begun preparations to return home.

"The Istanbul round was initially scheduled for two days. However, in an effort to reach an amicable agreement with the Taliban regime, the Pakistani side, in earnest, continued the talks for four days," Foreign Office spokesman Tahir Hussain Andarabi said at his weekly briefing on Friday.

"We would see these deliberations [in Istanbul] as comprehensive and all-encompassing as we move to the next stage," Mr Andarabi added.

He, however, urged against critiquing the statement. "The statement released by the foreign ministry of Turkiye was a kind of covering note on the talks that were held. It should be read as a preface to a book rather than as the book itself," he explained while responding to questions about the statement not fully reflecting the Pakistani position, especially as it missed a reference to the TTP's presence in Afghanistan.

"Pakistan does not seek further escalation of hostilities but expects the Afghan Taliban regime to honour its commitments to the international community and address Pakistan's legitimate security concerns by taking concrete and verifiable actions against

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LAHORE: Pakistan pacer Salman Mirza (Centre) celebrates with teammate Babar Azam after claiming the wicket of South African batter Matthew Breetzke (Right) during the second T20 International at the Gaddafi Stadium on Friday. Pakistan won by nine wickets, thanks to opener Saim Ayub's blistering 71 off 38 as his team chased down a paltry 111-run target. Earlier, some brilliant bowling from Salman, who took 3-14 and Faheem Ashraf (4-23) saw Pakistan bundle the visitors out cheaply. The series-deciding third match will be played at the same venue today (Saturday).—AFP Report on Page 18

Punjab orders Imran's video-link trial in nearly dozen May 9 cases

• Trials to be held in Rawalpindi ATC • Home dept says move will help ensure PTI founder's security, prevent untoward incidents

By Malik Asad

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab government has notified that all eleven FIRs registered against former prime minister Imran Khan in connection with the violent protests of May 9, 2023, will now be tried in the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi.

The trials will be conducted via video link from Adiala jail, where the PTI founder remains incarcerated.

According to a notification issued by the Home Department, the decision has been made under Sections 15(2) and 21(2)(b) of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

The order directs that proceedings in all eleven FIRs — registered at various police stations, including RA Bazaar, Civil Lines, City, Waris Khan, New Town, Morgah, Sadiqabad, Saddar Wah, and Cantt — be held at the Rawalpindi ATC through video link from Adiala jail. The Home Department stated that the arrangement aims to ensure Imran Khan's security and prevent any untoward incident during the hearings.

The fresh order replaces earlier notifications dated June 21, 2023, October 4, 2023, and November 6, 2024, which also addressed the transfer of trial venues. The last such notification was withdrawn by the Punjab government after being challenged before the Lahore High Court (LHC).

With this latest order, the government has once again sanctioned the holding of Imran Khan's trials through remote proceedings.

Self-sabotage: Editorial on Page 6

An anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi had earlier dismissed the PTI's plea challenging the government's decision to have Imran Khan appear via video link in the case pertaining to the violent protest outside the General Headquarters (GHQ) — one of the several May 9 cases. Judge Amjad Ali Shah ruled that the provincial government's notification was valid and that the accused would continue to attend proceedings virtually from jail.

Imran Khan's arrest on May 9, 2023, triggered widespread riots across Pakistan, during which government buildings and military installations — including the GHQ in Rawalpindi — were stormed and vandalised. Following the unrest, dozens of FIRs were lodged against PTI leaders and supporters under

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Petrol, diesel prices raised, LPG rate cut

ISLAMABAD: The government on Friday increased the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) by up to 1.1 per cent for the fortnight ending November 15, while reducing the rate of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

As per a late-night announcement, the Ministry of Finance said the revision followed movements in international oil markets and recommendations from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and other relevant ministries.

The ex-depot price of HSD has been raised by Rs3.02 per litre (1.1pc) to Rs278.44 from Rs275.42.

Most of the transport sector runs on HSD, and its price is considered inflationary as it is mainly used in heavy transport vehicles, trains, and agricultural machinery such as trucks, buses, tractors, tube-wells, and threshers.

The increase particularly adds to the cost of vegetables and other essential commodities.

The price of petrol has been increased by Rs2.43 to Rs265.45 per litre from Rs263.02.

Petrol is primarily used in private transport and directly affects the budgets of middle- and lower-middle-class consumers.

Meanwhile, Ogra notified a Rs5.88 per kilogram (2.83pc) reduction in LPG's consumer price to Rs201.60 per kg from Rs207.49. The price of an 11.8kg domestic cylinder has been fixed at Rs2,378.89 for November, down Rs69.44 from Rs2,448.53 in October. —Khaleeq Kiani

10 ministers sworn in as KP cabinet takes shape

• Size of all-male cabinet swells to 13 with addition of two advisers, a special assistant • PM says he offered Afridi federal govt's full support; claims CM 'rejected' offer • Afridi, Kundi meet to discuss law & order situation

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: Ten members of the newly-formed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet took oath of office on Friday at a ceremony held at the Governor House in Peshawar.

Earlier, speculations were rife and many names circulated on social media; however, the final list was shared late on Thursday night.

KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi administered the oath to 10 provincial ministers, according to a statement from his office.

They included Meena Khan Afridi, Arshad Ayub Khan, Amjad Ali, Aftab Alam Afridi, Fazal Shakoor Khan, Khaleequr Rehman, Riaz Khan, Syed Fakhar Jehan, Aqibullah Khan and Faisal Khan Tarakai, it added.

"[The] KP governor congratulated the newly sworn-in provincial ministers and expressed his best wishes to them."

A statement issued from the Governor House read that both men also talked about public welfare projects, along with plans for the province's development and prosperity

KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, provincial assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati, Chief Secretary Shehab Ali

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PESHAWAR: Governor Faisal Karim Kundi administers oath of office to KP cabinet members.—Dawn

US seeks Pakistan's help to balance China's mineral grip

• Critical Minerals Forum chief meets Aurangzeb
• Islamabad welcomes move; asks team to revert with a detailed framework for collaboration

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: A leading US delegation met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad on Friday, seeking to build secure and transparent mineral supply chains for American industry amid Washington's growing concerns over China's upper hand in global rare earth materials.

The delegation led by Robert Louis Strayer II, president of the US government-funded Critical Minerals Forum (CMF), "discussed avenues of cooperation in the minerals and mining sector, strengthening supply-chain security, and encouraging responsible and sustainable investment in Pakistan's critical minerals landscape" with a Pakistani team headed by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, according to an official statement.

The meeting took place as the US and India announced a 10-year defence framework agreement.

The CMF's focus is driven by the strategic threat posed by Beijing's control over key resources. "China's dominance of critical mineral supply chains has become a well-known threat to US national security, economic competitiveness, and long-term strategic objectives," Strayer wrote in his only article on the CMF website.

Mr Strayer told Pakistan that the CMF is working globally to support reliable supply chains for US industry, particularly in emerging markets.

The forum, he said, "focused on rare and niche metals, including

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New AJK PM's announcement to be made from Kashmir, says Bilawal

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday said the announcement about the next prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir would be made from AJK instead of Islamabad.

He was talking to reporters after chairing a meeting of PPP's AJK parliamentary party here, which discussed matters related to formation of PPP government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari, however, did not disclose exactly when the announcement would be made.

He said the role of the establishment in the 2018 elections was evident to everyone. "Despite that, PPP candidates contested and won the elections, but our victory was converted into defeat overnight," he remarked. He said the same script was repeated in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan.

"This non-political conspiracy and approach created a political vacuum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which harmed the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. "I promised to the people of Jammu and Kashmir that no matter what, I will never let you down. I have represented Azad Jammu and Kashmir and occupied Jammu and Kashmir globally, and I will continue to do so," he said.

He thanked all those who either won AJK elections or joined the party later and said the party was now in a comfortable position to form its government in the state. He said the few months' time before the next elections in Azad Kashmir will br a test for the party and all efforts during this time will be made to act as per aspirations and

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PM hails Pakistan's prominence on world stage

• Lauds US President Trump for his role in India ceasefire • Praises sacrifices by people of KP, armed forces
• Promises Daanish schools standards will be 'at a par with Aitchison College'

By Zahiruddin

CHITRAL: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday that Pakistan has secured a prominent position in the international community, acknowledging the diplomatic intervention of US President Donald Trump in helping to ease tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi in May of this year.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a Daanish school here, the premier noted that Mr Trump's efforts prevented a potential escalation by establishing a ceasefire between the two countries.

The prime minister reiterated his resolve to eliminate terrorism and promote peace and prosperity across the country.

He lauded the armed forces for their sacrifices and professionalism under the leadership of Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir.

The premier said the patriotism of the people of KP was exemplary, particularly that of Chitral, noting that were highly educated and civilised people despite lacking educational facilities.

Islamabad's Daanish School to be completed by December: Page 4

"That is the reason why [PML-N president and former prime minister] Mian Nawaz Sharif always took special interest in the development projects of this area [Chitral] during his tenure."

He said that after assuming the office of the prime minister, he had planned to focus federal resources on remote areas and bring prosperity through such facilities so that KP, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir could also develop on par with Punjab and Sindh.

CLAD in traditional Chitrali attire, PM Shehbaz Sharif is briefed on the Daanish school project during a ceremony.—PPI

Daanish school

Describing the Daanish school as a special gift from the federal government to the people of Chitral, he said that residents could previously only dream of an educational institution of this quality, but now it had become a reality.

The prime minister stated that the standard of Daanish schools would in no way be lower than that of Aitchison College in Lahore.

"Completely free education, along with boarding and lodging facilities, will be provided, allowing poor and orphaned children to compete

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ON OTHER PAGES

23 bids netted for offshore exploration

The government on Friday received 23 bids for 40 offshore exploration blocks, a result officials called 'encouraging' despite most offers coming from state-owned entities. The round, after 18 years of gap, secured initial investment commitments of approximately $80 million for geological studies. International firms like Turkish Petroleum also joined some bids as partners. **Page 9**

Umrah visa validity cut to one month

Saudi Arabia is reducing Umrah visa validity from three months to one month starting next week in a bid to manage overcrowding in the holy cities. The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah said pilgrims must enter the kingdom within 30 days of issuance. Officials clarified the change does not affect the permitted duration of stay for pilgrims, which remains three months after arrival in the kingdom. **Page 12**

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